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Articles in Today's Clips

Friday, December 29, 2006

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THE BAY CITY TIMES

We must save our children from abuse

Friday, December 29, 2006

We fear for Michigan's children.

While our state has agencies and investigators in place to protect them from harm, too many children are still abused.

Some even die.

Like 7-year-old Ricky Holland of Williamston, beaten to death and buried. His adoptive parents are charged in the crimes. And 5-year-old Rose Kelley-Bowen, who was allowed to die of illness in her filthy Flint home.

Neighbors might have known the lives these children lived.

So, too, might have the state's child-protection system.

They didn't have to suffer the fates they met.

The potential for even more such tragedies is way too high, according to recent reports from Kids Count in Michigan and reviews of cases by the state Office of Children's Ombudsman.

Too many children are slipping through the safety nets that are supposed to keep them from harm.

Why must some of these children be an afterthought?

Losing track of just one little child could mean losing the life of a person, just beginning a young life, at the hands of an uncaring or cruel adult.

The Michigan House and Senate this month sent a bill to Gov. Jennifer Granholm demanding that the Ombudsman Office be removed from oversight of the governor and be placed under a legislative panel.

Whatever.

Political chest-thumping doesn't save lives.

Real, nose-to-the-details work does.

If case workers aren't doing their jobs, they should be shown the door. If they aren't supervised, their bosses should be fired.

Caring people dedicated to saving children's lives should replace them.

Simple as that.

Save the children.

Nothing else matters.

ClickOnDetroit.com

Police Arrest Man Accused As Peeping Tom

UPDATED: 9:01 am EST December 29, 2006

ANN ARBOR, Mich. -- Ann Arbor police told Local 4 they have the man in custody who was allegedly spying on two young girls in a mall bathroom Tuesday night.

Ann Arbor police said the man is Gary Wayne Carr, 41, of Dearborn Heights.

They said he may also be responsible for similar incidents in Waterford Township and Dearborn Heights.

Carr was arrested at 8:30 Thursday night in Dearborn Heights after police received a tip of where he could be found.

Ann Arbor Police contacted the Dearborn Heights police and they staked out the residence until Carr was found

Police identified Carr as a person of interest after he left his black Chevrolet S-10, and also a key piece of evidence overnight at Briarwood Mall on Tuesday evening.

Police said two girls, ages 8 and 11, of Ypsilanti Township, were in the Briarwood Mall bathroom when they saw a man follow them in and peek through the cracks of the stalls and underneath the door.

The girls alerted their father and pointed out Carr as he crouched in a nearby hallway, according to authorities. When the father tried to confront him, Carr ran and led the father and other mall patrons on a chase that ended when he disappeared outside, police said.

While leaving the mall in their car, the father and the girls spotted Carr in the parking lot and hit him with their car, police said.

The man was not seriously injured and ran away, according to investigators.

Carr faces felony charges that could, under a recently passed federal law, lead to one day in jail or life in prison.

Those who have any information on the man are asked to contact Ann Arbor police at 734-996-3199.

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December 29, 2006

Macomb Briefs

Sterling Hts.: Molestation claims studied

Authorities are investigating six claims involving molestation by Sterling Heights resident Donald Fitzpatrick, according to the Macomb County Prosecutor's Office. Fitzpatrick, 61, is in jail on charges of sexually assaulting a 7-year-old girl and fondling a 9-year-old. Authorities continue to investigate and believe there are at least two other neighborhood girls who have been victimized by him, said Rebecca Oster, assistant prosecutor. In addition, two adult women have come forward and told authorities they were assaulted by Fitzpatrick more than 20 years ago, she said. The statute of limitations prevents prosecution in those cases, but the women could be used as witnesses, Oster said. An arraignment is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. Tuesday in Macomb Circuit Court.

Eastpointe: Hearing in infant abuse case

A 20-year-old Eastpointe man charged with abusing his 5-week-old daughter faces a Jan. 10 preliminary examination. The infant is in the pediatric intensive care unit at St. John Hospital in Detroit. Ted Wieckhorst was arraigned Dec. 20 in 38th District Court in connection with the Dec. 14 incident. Police said his daughter was hospitalized with a skull fracture, internal bleeding and a cut lip.

Roseville: Sidewalk plan extended

The Roseville City Council has approved extending its sidewalk replacement program for another year with C & L Enterprises of Shelby Township, City Manager Stephen Truman said. The program is budgeted every year at \$400,000, but the funds are returned to the city coffers once residents pay for the work done to their sidewalks. The city's engineering department will now begin preliminary marks on slabs that need repairs or replacement in the area of Gratiot to Interstate 94 and 10 Mile to Frazho. The sidewalks will be replaced in the summer.

Ray Twp.: Woman, 34, killed in crash

A 34-year-old woman was killed Wednesday when she lost control of her sport utility vehicle and slammed into a pole. Jamey Watson of Ray Township was driving her 2000 Dodge Durango south on North Avenue late Wednesday when the vehicle skidded off the road. It rolled over and then struck a utility pole. Watson, who police say was not wearing a seat belt, was pronounced dead at the scene. A 25-year-old female passenger from Chesterfield Township received minor injuries. The passenger, who police say was wearing a seat belt, was treated and released at the scene.

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Domestic violence rates way down, study says

Lansing State Journal 12/28/06

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Domestic violence rates fell sharply between 1993 and 2004, the Justice Department said Thursday, noting that American Indian women and native Alaskan women are far more likely to be victimized than whites and other minorities .

The Bureau of Justice Statistics said that "intimate partner violence" rates fell by more than 50 percent. The decline mirrored a decade-long trend in other violent crimes, and the department did not suggest a cause.

"There's still generally no consensus about why any crime in general has dropped," said Shannan Catalano, the study's author. "It's safe to say it's more than one factor that went into it."

Some experts attribute the decline to better training for police and more funding for prosecution, two key elements of the 1994 Violence Against Women Act. Investigators increasingly are better trained to handle abuse cases and bring them to court.

"For the first time, there are entire domestic violence units in law enforcement," said Lonna Stevens, director of the Sheila Wellstone Institute, a Minnesota-based domestic violence organization. "We've had protocols and policies developed for responding to this."

In 1993, there were about 5.8 incidents of nonfatal violence for every 1,000 U.S. residents above the age of 12. By 2004, that number had fallen to 2.6, the agency said. Homicides fell by about 30 percent, from 2,269 in 1993 to 1,544 in 2004.

The Justice Department defines intimate partner violence as violence by a current or former spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend or a same-sex partner.

Stevens said police have been less successful responding to and deterring abusive behavior in some minority communities, where racism and cultural differences can keep reporting rates low.

Over the 12-year reporting period, about 18 out of every 1,000 American Indian and native Alaskan women were victimized - a violence rate three times higher than among white women.

Black women were more likely than white women to be abused but the study also found that they were more likely to report their abuse to the police than white women.

Women in their early 20s and women who were divorced or separated had the greatest risk of being abused, the study found. Violence was also more common in low-income households.

Asian males, white males and the elderly reported the lowest rates of partner violence.



KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Teen accused of knife attack

Friday, December 29, 2006

By Cedric Ricks

cricks@kalamazoogazette.com 388-8557

A 17-year-old man faces a felony assault charge for allegedly cutting a teenager with a knife during a fight in Kalamazoo Township.

Aaron Scott Thompson, 17, was arraigned Wednesday on a charge of assault with intent to do great bodily harm less than murder, according to the Kalamazoo Township Police Department.

Officers responding to a report of a fight in the 1200 block of Wayside Drive at about 3:30 a.m. Wednesday found a 16-year-old male with numerous cuts to his upper torso, police said. Thompson and the 16-year-old were fighting when Thompson went inside a residence, got a knife then used it to cut the other teenager, according to police.

The 16-year-old was treated at Borgess Medical Center and released, police said.

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December 29, 2006

Mount Clemens

Man faces charges in sex abuse of mom

Son, from Clinton Twp., assaulted incapacitated mother at Berry medical facility, authorities say.

Steve Pardo / The Detroit News

MOUNT CLEMENS -- A 37-year-old Clinton Township man faces charges that he sexually assaulted his incapacitated 66-year-old mother in her room at the Martha T. Berry medical care facility.

He was visiting his cancer-stricken mother at the Mount Clemens facility Christmas evening when the incident occurred, police say.

"One of the nursing staff visiting the room saw his genitals were exposed and in close proximity to his mother," Macomb County Sheriff's Capt. Anthony Wickersham said.

The man was held by security, and the sheriff's office was called at about 10:45 p.m.

The Detroit News is withholding the man's name to protect the identity of his mother.

Martha T. Berry is a 217-bed county-owned and operated medical facility for people who require skilled nursing care, therapy or hospice care.

Wickersham said the woman is unable to speak or take care of herself. But investigators were able to ask her questions.

The woman communicated answers by squeezing the authorities' hands.

The son was arraigned Wednesday in 41-B District Court in Clinton Township. He faces third-degree criminal sexual conduct, indecent exposure and possession of marijuana. The criminal sexual conduct charge is the most serious. It is a felony punishable by up to 15 years in prison.

He pleaded not guilty to all charges and was ordered held on a \$50,000 bond. A preliminary examination is scheduled for Jan. 10. He remains in the Macomb County Jail.

Officials at Martha T. Berry could not be reached for comment Thursday.

You can reach Steve Pardo at (586) 468-3614 or spardo@detnews.com.

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A FRESH START: Drug nightmare ends, life begins

Program's graduates wrestle back their futures

BY AMBER HUNT

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

December 29, 2006

As BeKira Rollins stood sobbing before 36th District Court Judge Leonia Lloyd, she admitted she'd been a handful for nearly 1 1/2 years.

Rollins, 38, had reluctantly entered Fresh Start -- a 15- to 24-month Wayne County rehabilitation program for prostitutes -- after she was arrested in December 2004 and given a choice between enrolling or a long stint in jail.

She'd entered surly, rarely speaking to the other women in the program.

But Lloyd, who's as quick to smile and praise as she is to lecture, refused to give up on her.

Despite Rollins' attitude, she stayed off drugs and didn't run back to Detroit's streets, where for two years she had sold her body for drug money. Drug testing is a mandatory part of Fresh Start, and Lloyd sends abusers back to jail.

Eventually, Rollins' pain came out in verse. She sent Lloyd one of her poems, and the judge began encouraging her to read them in court.

And on this day in May, as she graduated from Fresh Start -- drug-free for 17 months with a job, an apartment and her teenage son back in her life -- she read Lloyd one of her favorites, "For Keeping Your Hands on Me":

I am so ashamed for what I did

I left my mama and my kid

You brought me back from the depths of hell

You opened the bars to my cold, cold cell

Rollins, like many of the women who enter the Wayne County program, had been hardened by the streets.

Addicted to crack, the women had sold their bodies to strangers, sometimes for as little as \$5. And when police caught them, they often faced meager misdemeanor charges they considered to be a joke.

"I thought nobody cared what happened to me," said Rollins, who was scolded by Lloyd after the judge learned Rollins had stolen from her grandmother to feed her addiction.

But on graduation day, their guards are down and the tears flow freely. They give thanks for



Success: Aletha Dixon, 36, of Detroit hugs Wayne County Sheriff's Cpl. Betty Shedrick after Judge Leonia Lloyd, right, gave her a diploma during a Fresh Start graduation ceremony on Nov. 15 in 36th District Court.

A chance for a better life

Fresh Start is an innovative program -- the first of its kind in the country -- begun by the Wayne County Sheriff's Office and designed to get prostitutes off the streets and onto paths toward better lives. Participants get counseling, schooling, job training and drug testing.

For more than a year, Free Press reporter Amber Hunt and photographer Susan Tusa followed the progress of those in the program and those trying to help them.

This is the second of two parts on what they saw.

the officers who arrested them, for the case managers who kept them on track, for the other women in the program with whom they've bonded, and especially for the stern-but-loving Lloyd.

The stars of Fresh Start clearly are the women who fight to turn their lives around. But the heart of the program lies in people like Lloyd who help run it -- and never give up hope.

The innovators

One of those hidden behind the scenes is Beth Roberts.

Roberts, program manager for the Wayne County jails, has long believed that women who turn to prostitution need more than misdemeanor tickets for soliciting; they need drug treatment, counseling and lots of supervision.

So when Wayne County Sheriff Warren Evans asked her to come up with an idea to address residents' complaints about prostitutes in their neighborhoods, she brainstormed and helped pull together various agencies, including the Detroit Health Department and Lloyd's court.

Fresh Start was born.

At first, Roberts didn't know what to expect. But of the 100 women who have been admitted, 18 have graduated and 59 are trying.

Roberts regularly visits the women at the Dickerson Detention Facility in Hamtramck, where new recruits and rearrested runaways are held. She calls women who seem to be struggling to find out what's wrong and offer support. Sometimes she even joins deputies on sweeps -- hours-long searches for prostitutes who might be eligible for the program.

When women are stopped, Roberts asks hard-hitting questions: Aren't you worried about getting beaten or killed? What would your mother think? How long do you think it'll take before the drugs kill you?

Roberts received the annual Wayne County Humanitarian Award this month for her work with Fresh Start.

"I feel really good about it," Roberts said. "It's a matter of maintaining it, expanding it and making it greater."

Easy money, a hard life

As Rollins took a Detroit bus to a therapy appointment last summer, several months before she graduated from Fresh Start, she transferred at a stop near Puritan and Wyoming on Detroit's northwest side. That's where she used to work, she said, looking around at the prostitutes and drug dealers she recognized from a year earlier.

She pointed out a gas station across the street where she'd buy cheap drinks and food between tricks. And she recalled the emptiness she felt while waiting for johns.

To get someone to stop, she simply flagged down a slow-moving car with a what's-up gesture of her arms. The car would stop, she'd hop in and a few minutes later, she'd have cash in her pocket.

"It was so easy," said Rollins, whose life on the streets began after her boyfriend, a man she called the love of her life, died. She sank into a deep depression and turned to drugs.

How to help

Organizers are seeking many donations, including: clothing, toiletries and items such as furniture for graduates' new housing. They also hope to find employers for women ready to work and mentors to serve as life coaches. People interested in helping can call Beth Roberts, program manager for the county's jails, at 313-875-5182.

Judge Leonia Lloyd: One of the saviors

A stellar student: Lloyd graduated from Wayne State University with bachelor's degrees in English and education and speech, then taught for four years at Cass Technical High School before re-enrolling in Wayne State's Law School. She and her twin, Leona, both graduated with juris doctor degrees in 1979.

Her draw to law: Leonia Lloyd, 57, practiced law for 10 years before she was elected to the 36th District Court bench in 1992. Her sister was elected to the same court two years later.

Double trouble: The twins worked criminal dockets and began demanding that defendants go back to school or obtain their GEDs. Leonia Lloyd said she already ran her courtrooms in a nontraditional manner, encouraging spectators to applaud defendants who made great strides.

A change of venue: In 2002, a year after her

Rollins said she sometimes thought about returning to the streets for the easy money after entering Fresh Start, but she fought the urge.

She's an anomaly. Many of the women in Fresh Start stumble at least once. Some are gripped by addictions. Others aren't ready or open for help.

Then there are women who suffer from mental illnesses who are put on a cocktail of medications. Some quit taking their pills and the urge to use illegal drugs becomes too hard to resist. They run.

Beating the cycle

Those who relapse, no matter the reason, are given second and third chances. Others haven't stumbled at all. They've graduated on time, had tickets dismissed and turned their lives around. Some attend support groups to keep their strength; others work as mentors with Fresh Start. None of the program's 18 graduates has had run-ins with law enforcement, court officials said.

Janice Crouse, of the Washington, D.C.-based Concerned Women for America, said treating prostitutes with rehabilitation instead of jail is "very forward-looking."

"The average age of someone beginning in sex trafficking is 14," said Crouse, who's studied prostitution for 10 years. "Some are homeless, some are street kids, some were lured by a pimp who seemed like a father figure because their own parents weren't there."

She said Fresh Start's success rate so far is impressive. But it's too soon to know whether they'll succeed in the long run, said John Lowman, a criminologist who teaches at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada. He has studied prostitution for 30 years.

"Even when you go to this extent to help people break that cycle, you don't know whether it's going to be successful in the end," he said. "You have women in this vicious addiction-driven prostitution cycle."

Still, those who have graduated say their lives are forever changed.

Tracey Mathis, 36, who joined Fresh Start in April 2004, has been clean for more than two years. She has her GED now, and a full-time job.

Renee Jones, 48, graduated in May and lives with a friend in a house on the city's east side. Despite suffering two strokes that keep her from working and have affected her speech, she talks to church congregations and young women to tell her story.

She hasn't stumbled since finishing the program, she said proudly: "No, nuh-uh, none of that."

She's also reunited with her family.

"We're all proud of her," said Jones' 29-year-old daughter, Tia, who was raised by Jones' mother.

Linda Freeny summed up her new life, saying simply: "I got my TV in the living room. I got my bed. I got my curtains," the 40-year-old said. "I'm just fine."

Words of encouragement

sister died of a heart attack, Leonia Lloyd was asked to help with the 36th District Court's drug docket. Hoots and hollers from spectators and accolades for Lloyd grew.

Reward vs. reprimand:

"Years ago, I heard that what a judge says to a defendant means more than any monetary thing you can give them. When I first heard that, I thought, 'Oh, really?' So I say something to that person, something one-on-one between just them and me."

BeKira Rollins: One of the saved

Her teenage years:

Rollins attended Mumford High School in Detroit, dropping out as a sophomore. She worked clerical and office jobs as she studied for her GED, which she got in 1995.

A wrong turn: Rollins, now 38 and considered one of Fresh Start's top success stories, began prostituting herself about four years ago after her boyfriend died. Deeply depressed, she quit her customer service job and turned to crack. Soon after, she began hooking to pay for her habit, working mostly at Puritan and Wyoming on Detroit's northwest side.

A tough beginning:

Considered a difficult case because of her surly attitude, Rollins eventually softened, turning to poetry to express her angst and describe her life on the streets. Thirty-sixth District Court Judge Leonia Lloyd

While the women's journeys begin on the streets, they're set to end in Lloyd's courtroom. A judge for 14 years, she's tough when disappointed and ecstatic when pleased.

encouraged her, often asking her to read her poems in court.

She repeatedly tells the women they're worth more than the johns they sold themselves to, more than the drugs with which they abused themselves.

She also scrutinizes the women's clothes, which are donated to the program, and scolds them when an outfit looks too "hoochie." Some habits are tough to break, she acknowledges, but she wants the women to dress ladylike -- nothing too tight or short. They have to know how to look professional for job interviews.

Giving thanks: That encouragement led to an outpouring of words: "Kicking and screaming, to rehab I went/ Bitter and angry, I knew what this meant/ No more get high, or even get low/ This was not where I wanted to go," she wrote in her book "Land of Oz," which thanks Lloyd and others for refusing to give up on her.

But even when Lloyd is vexed, she keeps her cool and simply lets the women know she's disappointed. That, mixed with praise at their progress, she said, is often enough to put the women back on track. When it isn't, she boots them back to the Dickerson Detention Facility.

"I see women who have been struggling," Lloyd said. "I've seen them come through hurdles, tears coming down their face, saying thank you.

"And I say, 'No, thank *you* for being there for yourself.' "

Goodbye to demons: Rollins now lives in an apartment with her son, Jalin, 15, and works at a department store.

Her courtroom lacks the somber, library-like silence other judges demand. Instead, defendants break into hoots and applause for those who've stayed clean. For those struggling, there are hugs and words of encouragement.

How the rehabilitation program turns lives around

Patience pays off

As Rollins, the poet, moved through the program, Lloyd remained patient. The more she wrote, the more Rollins' guard crumbled. Her poems describe herself as two people -- one, an empty shell searching to fill a void with drugs, money and men, the other a responsible woman who had raised a polite and caring son and needed God to set her straight.

Under the program run by agencies in Wayne County, a 36th District Court judge with expertise in the subject decides whether an arrested prostitute might succeed in Fresh Start. The woman then begins detoxification, therapy and classes.

Now, the tough-talking, streetwise woman breaks into tears when her son, 15-year-old Jalin, says how proud he is of her.

The day Rollins graduated, Lloyd beamed, saying one of the program's biggest challenges was ready to re-enter the world.

Rollins now works at a department store, where she was promoted this year.

Next comes round-the-clock supervision in a group home, with more therapy, counseling, church and doctor appointments.

"They told me I was responsible," she said, her voice breaking and her eyes welling. "No one's ever called me that before."

She has her own apartment and is working to get her book of poems published. It's called "Going Through Hell, Trying to Make It to Heaven."

Each month, the woman returns to court for a case update and has a drug test. Failing the test means starting over in the program.

Her son came up with the title.

She doesn't blush at being called one of Fresh Start's top successes.

"That's right, I am," she boasted. "Twenty-two months clean."

And a lifetime from where she started.

A woman who progresses goes to housing with more freedom and then, if successful, can live

Contact **AMBER HUNT** at 313-222-2708 or alhunt@freepress.com. Contact **SUSAN TUSA** at 313-222-6446 or stusa@freepress.com.

Old problem, new answer

BY AMBER HUNT
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

December 29, 2006

When the idea was born for a program to rehabilitate, not just reprimand, Wayne County prostitutes, some were skeptical.

"Most people thought this wasn't going to work because prostitution has been going on since the beginning of time," said Wayne County Sheriff's Cpl. Betty Shedrick, who helped launch the program in 2004.

But enough people had faith. And Fresh Start was launched -- a collaboration involving the Detroit Health and Law departments, the city's Bureau of Substance Abuse, 36th District Drug Court and Probation, and the Wayne County Sheriff's Office and jail system.

Just getting those agencies to collaborate was a first, said Calvin Trent of the Bureau of Substance Abuse. Last month, the Detroit Police Department agreed to begin helping the Sheriff's Office pick up prostitutes who have entered and run from the program or who have outstanding warrants and would be eligible to enroll.

The reason? Most prostitutes are selling themselves to support a drug habit, and if the women kick the habit, they're less likely to end up back on the streets. That doesn't just help the women, Trent said. It helps the neighborhoods where the women work.

"This is a quality of life issue," he said. "Parents are afraid to let their children walk the streets. It's affecting our residents."

The program means two deputies and two Detroit police officers might be scouring for prostitutes at night instead of working other crimes. But program backers believe the effort is worth the resources. Fresh Start also saves jail space and taxpayer dollars in the long run, Wayne County Sheriff Warren Evans said.

"This makes the most business sense," Evans said. "Having them in jail is costly, and it's not doing anything to benefit the person coming through. They just go right back out and back onto the streets."

The agencies involved have earmarked money in their budgets to keep Fresh Start afloat. It also has been awarded two state grants of \$65,000 apiece. Health department doctors and volunteer dentists -- drugs often rot teeth -- also treat the women at no cost.

"The idea is to use the justice system to reroute these women into treatment," Trent said.

The program has gained interest around the country, and its creators have been invited to seminars in Grand Rapids, Washington state and Ohio to talk about it.

Of the 100 women who entered, 18 have graduated and 59 are enrolled.

John Lowman, who's studied prostitution for 30 years, said he would hope the rate would be higher after two years.

"Those figures themselves tell you how difficult a situation these women are in," said Lowman, a criminologist who teaches at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada. "Until you can deal with the drug addiction, it seems impossible to end" the cycle.

But Evans is impressed with the results so far. It's a long-term program and some will inevitably fail, but a nearly 20% graduation rate is strong, he said. He expects more women will graduate as the program evolves.

It proves that plenty of women walking the streets would choose better lives if given the option, Evans said.

"If we don't do anything," he said, "they'll be career women in the legal system or they'll be dying on the streets."

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Once their enemy, now their 'Mama'

BY AMBER HUNT
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

December 29, 2006

As nighttime fell and Detroit's streets began to teem with prostitutes, Wayne County Sheriff's Cpl. Betty Shedrick went to work.

Her goal was simple: to find women who'd run from the rehabilitation program they'd enrolled in or to line up new recruits.

So she suited up and prepared for a long night of questioning strangers, flashing pictures of the women she hoped to find and lecturing those who refused to join Fresh Start. The innovative program in Wayne County is designed to get prostitutes off the streets -- and off the drugs that landed them there -- and onto a path toward healthy lives.

"I let them know this ain't no way to live," said Shedrick, who retired this fall for medical reasons after two years of serving as Fresh Start's backbone.

Once an Army medic in Vietnam, Shedrick had a harsh, been-there, done-that attitude and the body of a linebacker. But the Fresh Start women soon learned Shedrick's toughness was a front. She earned the nickname "Mama" for being unfailingly supportive as well as no-nonsense. She would withhold a hug from a woman who had disappointed her as quickly as she'd cry at a graduation ceremony. Most of the women had her cell phone number.

"There's a special place in my heart for these girls," Shedrick said during one early-morning sweep. "Most come from broken homes and hearts; they've been raped; they've had worse things done to them than we can imagine."

The sheriff's searches lead to dilapidated crack houses and shady motels. Deputies point out run-down businesses behind which they've arrested prostitutes and johns having sex and swapping drugs.

In the early-morning hours, when most people are asleep, Detroit's streets seem to seethe. Flick on a light and the cockroaches would scatter, the deputies say. Women and cross-dressers in low-cut shirts and miniskirts approach cars looking for "dates."

They find plenty of takers.

Hooked on drugs, the women make maddening choices, Shedrick said: "If she was hungry and had a \$20 bill, even if she was starving, she'd use the drugs."

That's when most people give up on the women, she said. But Shedrick fought alongside them, even when they stumbled and landed back in jail.

Though retired, she misses her "girls," she said, and wants to figure out how to keep working with the program.

"I'm not going to pat myself on the back," she said. "But there's nothing you're going to tell me to do that I'm not going to give my all."

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Study: Many kids too fat by preschool

12/29/2006, 3:45 a.m. ET

By LAURAN NEERGAARD
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Far too many kids are fat by preschool, and Hispanic youngsters are most at risk, says new research that's among the first to **focus on children growing up in poverty**. The study couldn't explain the disparity: White, black and Hispanic youngsters alike watched a lot of TV, and researchers spotted no other huge differences between the families.

But one important predictor of a pudgy preschooler was whether the child was still using a bottle at the stunning age of 3, concluded the study being published online Thursday by the American Journal of Public Health.

"These children are already disadvantaged because their families are poor, and by age 3 they are on track for a lifetime of health problems related to obesity," said lead researcher Rachel Kimbro of the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Some 17 percent of U.S. youngsters are obese, and millions more are overweight. Obesity can lead to diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol, sleep problems and other disorders — and the problem starts early. Overweight preschoolers have a five times higher risk of being fat at age 12 than do lean preschoolers, scientists reported last fall.

Kimbro focused on the poor, culling data on more than 2,000 3-year-olds from a study that tracks from birth children born to low-income families in 20 large U.S. cities.

Thirty-two percent of the white and black tots were either overweight or obese, vs. 44 percent of the Hispanics.

Why were the Hispanics at higher risk? Kimbro checked a long list of factors, from children's TV habits to whether mothers had easy access to grocery stores. Nothing could fully explain the difference. "We were surprised," she said.

Children were particularly at risk if their mothers were obese. So were those who still took a bottle to bed at age 3, as did 14 percent of the Hispanic youngsters, 6 percent of the whites and 4 percent of the blacks.

That finding supports other research that "one of the most common causes of overweight in children is overfeeding," said Dr. Philip Nader, a pediatrician and professor emeritus at the University of California at San Diego.

Pediatricians say even babies should never take a bottle to bed, and that children should start drinking from a cup around age 1.

Kimbo now wonders what cultural differences — such as whether Hispanic mothers think chubby children are healthier — might also play a role, something the current study couldn't address.

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December 29, 2006

Feds fail workers hurt by outsourcing

Critics call for massive overhaul of program designed to help employees displaced by globalization.

Gordon Trowbridge / Detroit News Washington Bureau

The machine-tool designers at Tesco Technologies' Auburn Hills plant had long suspected that the Indian engineers whom they had helped train would one day take their jobs. The layoff notices, in the summer of 2004, were no surprise.

But the Tesco engineers had not imagined that they would face a second opponent: the U.S. Department of Labor. When they applied for help from a federal program designed to help those unemployed because of international trade, the department first delayed, then denied their application.

More than two years later, they're still waiting for benefits, despite a federal judge's ruling that the labor department officials essentially invented their reason for denying the workers' application.

"I think their process (is) no matter what, they're going to deny it," said Gary Mosey, 50, of Oxford Township, who filed the original application and has been fighting since. "It's so late now, several of these people have either found another way to hang on, or they went down already."

One example of that, Mosey said, was the situation of a former co-worker, 60-year-old Lawrence Lawson, who was arrested in July after police said he tried to rob a Troy bank; his lawyer said the man was desperate for a place to live, even a jail cell, after losing his home.

The Tesco case is one of dozens in recent years that have critics calling for a massive overhaul of Trade Adjustment Assistance, a 40-year-old program that is supposed to shield American workers from the downside of the global economy.

Manufacturing workers who lose their jobs due to international trade are eligible for an extra two years of unemployment payments and training for a new career, even help in some cases with medical coverage or moving expenses. There is no accurate count of how many workers are denied benefits nationwide.

But in a series of sometimes harshly worded opinions, the federal court that hears appeals of application decisions has criticized the Labor Department's administration of the program, accusing officials of shoddy investigations and blatant misreading of the law.

"This is no longer people criticizing the Department of Labor for one or two cases. This is a systemwide problem," said Howard Rosen, a former congressional staffer who now heads an organization calling for changes in the trade adjustment program.

"The Labor Department, instead of helping people qualify, has seemed intent on as narrow a definition as possible," said Rep. Sander Levin, D-Royal Oak, a critic of Bush administration policies.

Tesco case highlights issues

Critics point to several problems with the program.

Funding is an obvious one: In most years, the need outstrips available funding, although that was not the case in the 2006 fiscal year when more than \$12 million was spent in Michigan on training and other job-seeking assistance. That was enough to help all eligible workers, said Lisa Berger, a specialist with the state Department of Labor and Economic Growth. The department administers the federally funded program.

The Tesco case highlights another issue: federal officials' apparent stinginess with benefits.

The Tesco workers, most of them with many years in the automotive business, designed assembly line tooling for General Motors Corp., which contracted with the company.

According to Mosey, beginning in the late 1990s, the workers were introduced to a group of Indian engineers, whom they trained to handle the basics of their tasks. The workers returned to India, Mosey said, where -- for lower pay -- they handled the basics of the GM work, and transmitted their designs to Auburn Hills, where the more experienced Tesco workers checked and finished them.

The first U.S. layoffs came in summer 2004, Mosey said, when about 20 workers lost their jobs. Mosey said he believes others were later eliminated. As the law outlines, Mosey applied for benefits from the Department of Labor, but twice labor officials have said the workers don't meet the law's requirements. They ruled because the workers' designs were custom-made, there were no "directly competitive" items from overseas, a requirement for triggering trade adjustment benefits.

A Tesco official declined to comment for this story, saying the workers' appeal was still before the federal courts. The company referred a reporter to documents filed with the Department of Labor, in which Tesco denied the workers' jobs were outsourced to India.

Peggy Abrahamson, a spokeswoman for the Department of Labor, said the agency would not comment on the Tesco case because it is still before the court.

Department criticized

But that illustrates part of the problem with the program, say Rosen and other critics: The Department of Labor's investigations often are little more than a call to company officials who, not surprisingly, are unwilling to admit that they've sent work overseas, which would allow their workers to receive benefits but could also bring bad publicity.

Mosey appealed the ruling to the U.S. Court of International Trade, a specialized federal court in New York City that, among other things, hears appeals of trade adjustment decisions. In November, the court ordered the Department of Labor to reconsider the Tesco

application, criticizing department officials for limiting their investigation to conversations with two GM officials.

The court also questioned the Department of Labor's contention that, because the Tesco workers designed specialized, one-of-a-kind assembly line layouts, their work did not represent the kind of manufacturing work for which the trade adjustment law was designed.

"Contrary to Labor's contention," wrote Judge Judith M. Barzilay, "Plaintiffs comprise the very type of workers for whom Congress implemented the TAA program."

Court rejects feds' reasons

Rosen, who helped write a 2002 overhaul of the program while working on Capitol Hill, said the Tesco case is hardly isolated. In appeal after appeal, Court of International Trade judges have rejected the Department of Labor's reasons for denying trade adjustment benefits to workers.

That is especially worrisome, experts say, because political support for free-trade policies depends on the public's confidence that workers harmed by trade will be protected.

"It's vital, absolutely crucial," said Daniel Drezner, a professor at Tufts University who specializes in trade issues. Drezner supports free-trade policies, which he said are, overall, beneficial both to Americans and those overseas -- sentiments shared by a broad cross-section of economists.

Public polling, Drezner said, suggests most Americans oppose free-trade policies unless they believe workers who lose their jobs will be protected. If trade adjustment assistance doesn't work, that support could vanish -- along with the economic benefits of trade.

You can reach Gordon Trowbridge at (202) 662-8738 or gtrowbridge@detnews.com.

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Economy helps shrink rental costs, but many still struggle

Friday, December 29, 2006

By Sarah Kellogg

Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON -- Michigan's continuing economic problems have translated into one bit of good news -- housing has become more affordable for renters and their families.

The combination of a bad economy and the migration of individuals and families out of Michigan in search of employment has resulted in a soft rental-housing market, which means cheaper rents in some counties, state officials say.

"Before the economy went bad, the for-sale market was strong and we had a weakening rental market," said Laurie Cummings, a rental-market analyst with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, charged with creating affordable housing in Michigan. "When the economy did go bad, the rental market started softening even more. Rent concessions are becoming more common."

There are about 992,000 rental households in Michigan, including apartments, homes and other units.

Landlord groups say an empty apartment that used to take 30 to 60 days to rent now can take between three months and a year. In addition, a number of rental property owners have reduced their rent or are offering discounts on security deposits to attract tenants.

"It's been a three-year stretch now that we've been facing a really competitive market for rental units," said Clay Powell, director of the Rental Property Owners Association of Kent County. "Vacancy rates have been anywhere between 15 percent and 50 percent. In the cities, the vacancy rates seem to be even higher."

Despite the depressed rental market, a recent report by the National Low Income Housing Coalition shows that the state's working-class families are still struggling to make the rent in a number of Michigan counties.

"Every year it is becoming more difficult for low-income families to find decent homes they can afford," said NLIHC President Sheila Crowley, noting that wages have not kept pace with inflation or rents.

The report shows that Michigan's statewide fair market rent is \$718 for a two-bedroom housing unit in 2007. A tenant would have to earn \$13.80 per hour, or about \$28,700, to afford that. The minimum wage in Michigan is \$6.95 an hour.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development calculates fair market rents annually by totaling gross rent and the cost of utilities. The formula is used to determine rental subsidies for low-income people enrolled in federal housing programs.

Michigan ranks 28th among the states in affordable rent, according to the coalition's report. Rent is deemed affordable if the cost of rent and utilities does not exceed 30 percent of annual household income.

The most expensive place in the nation to rent is the District of Columbia, where renters must earn \$24.73 an hour to afford a two-bedroom apartment in 2007. The least expensive is West Virginia, where they have to make \$10.10 an hour.

Michigan's most expensive counties to live in are in Southeast Michigan. At the top of the list is Washtenaw County, which has a fair market rent of \$983 in 2007. The coalition estimates that an individual would have to earn \$17.96 per hour or about \$37,360 annually to afford that rent.

The counties rounding out the top six in Michigan are Livingston with a fair market rent of \$856 and then a four-way tie for third place with Macomb, Oakland, St. Clair and Wayne. All four had fair market rents of \$793.

Thirty of Michigan's 83 counties have fair market rents of \$519, the lowest average for the state. The majority of those counties are in the northern Lower Peninsula and the Upper Peninsula. To afford that rent, households would have to earn \$9.98 an hour, or about \$20,760 annually.

Bay City was the least expensive metropolitan area for renters, with a fair market rent of \$546 compared to Ann Arbor, which topped the list with a fair market rent of \$934.

Contact reporter Sarah Kellogg at (202) 383-7810 or e-mail her at skellogg@boothnewspapers.com.

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Others of note who died in 2006

December 29, 2006

Patricia Smith died Jan. 13 at age 53.

As a **Child Protective Services specialist in the Michigan Department of Human Services**, she routinely rode a roller coaster of emotions when dealing with difficult family situations.

There were good days, and bad. But whatever the circumstance, Ms. Smith, who worked with the agency nearly 15 years, always was committed to finding a satisfactory solution.

Maxine Elam died Jan. 31 at age 72.

Springtime was a season of hope and renewal for Maxine Elam, a gardener extraordinaire.

Gardening not only was a labor of love, but also a necessity.

In several lots next to her east side Detroit home, the mother of 10 would annually cultivate every fruit and vegetable imaginable.

Any food that wasn't consumed, canned or frozen was donated to needy people and to seniors throughout the neighborhood.

Charles Kelly died Feb. 5 at age 73.

As founder and publisher of the Michigan Citizen, a local weekly newspaper for black readers, he believed that an informed public was the key to educating the community and initiating change, and he pursued that goal with determination.

With more than 56,000 subscribers, the paper bills itself as America's most progressive community newspaper.

Joseph Farkas died Feb. 20 at age 87.

As a corporate photographer with Ford Motor Co., for nearly four decades, it was his job to capture defining moments in the company's history and record them for posterity. He did it well.

Whether it was a shareholders' meeting in Stockholm, Mexican road racing in the Baja peninsula or newly unveiled car models, Mr. Farkas was there to chronicle the event.

The Rev. Richard Ingalls died April 24 at age 79.

He served as rector of Mariners' Church in downtown Detroit for more than four decades.

In 1975, when news of the sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald, a 729-foot freighter carrying a full load of iron ore, reached him, he was quick to respond.

Ingalls solemnly marched into the church bell tower and tolled the bell 29 times for each life lost.

Frank Boos III died May 9 at age 70.